

Coping With News of Tragic Events

Recent reports of protests, shootings, and unrest—whether they hit close to home or far away—may increase feelings of stress, worry, and anxiety. Even if you were not directly impacted by these events, you or family members may be experiencing difficult or painful emotions.

Research shows that people who are exposed to negative news, even when it doesn't directly impact them, can develop symptoms of psychological stress. Are you finding yourself sad or anxious about all the tragedies you hear and read about? Fortunately, there are things you can do to lessen their impact.

Tips for constructively dealing with bad news

Take a break from the news. Set aside a designated time daily for reading the news and limit it to that. Focusing too much on negative events leads to a sense of helplessness that carries over to other parts of your life. It can also lead to a sense of discouragement and hopelessness. There's no need to hide from the news, but don't make it the focus of your day. If you do, you risk letting negativity take control.

Balance negative news with good news. Many people are drawn to bad news and tragedy even when it causes them stress; you don't have to be one of them. Seek out sites online with inspirational stories to keep things in balance. Although the focus of the news reports may be negative, there *is* good news in the world. After digesting the day's bad news, find an inspiring story online and share them with others. You may give someone else's day a lift too. Keep your life balanced by reading about what's good in the world.

Do something to help others in times of tragedy. If a particular news story touches you, ask what you can do to help. You may be able to send a donation to help the victims or their families. We often feel powerless in the wake of tragedy, but taking action reduces that sense of helplessness—and helps others too.

Alleviate stress and talk about it. If something in the news deeply disturbs you, talk about it with someone you trust. Getting your feelings out in the open is therapeutic and helps to alleviate stress. If you want to keep it private, write it down in a journal. You can also call one of the caring counsellors at your assistance program who can speak to you about anxiety and worry due to tragic events.

Be a force for positive change. You can't change all the bad things that are happening in the world, but you can help out in a small way by volunteering for a good cause. For example, if you read stories about civil unrest that deeply disturb you, take action by learning about the reasons for the unrest—whether social, political, economic, or environmental—and seek opportunities to volunteer for an organization associated with the cause. Visit [VolunteerMatch](https://www.volunteermatch.org) to locate volunteering opportunities near you. It's another way to feel less helpless in the face of bad news and have a positive impact at the same time.

Try to keep bad news in perspective and balance it with uplifting, inspirational stories. You have control over how much bad news you digest in a day, so try not to focus only on the bad. When you feel impassioned by a story or a particular cause, ask if there's anything you can do to help—then take action.

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